Under the Sheltering Sign of the Red Cross

Mary Frances Billington Tells of the Start and the Working of the Society Respected in War and Peace.

THE words "Red Cross" are frequently on the lips of millions of people just now in a dozen or so different languages and yet comparatively few people know much about the society or how it started. Mary Frances Billington gives all this information in a book called "The Red Cross in War," which has just been published by the George H. Doran Company. Some extracts from it on the Red Cross organization are given herewith.

It is to the Geneva Convention of 1865, says the author, that the initial idea of humane care of the wounded on the field should be lifted above hostilities and that the sign of the Red Cross should save man or woman, camp, ship, wagon or train from the shell and bullets of the enemy. In civilized warfare it has always been respected, and the few occasions when this honorable agreement has not been observed in the past have always drawn down the execrations of the neutral nations.

To Germany it has remained to flout the solemn and binding understanding, and she has used the emblem of mercy and pity to mask murderous quick firing guns, knowing that English, French, Belgian and Russian would never suspect such treachery and would fearlessly approach the flag or the vehicles displaying it.

Yet Germany in 1870 owed much—very much—British help brought her under that flag. When the first awful stories came home after Gravelotte and Sedan of the neglected wounded and dying on the field common humanity demanded that something should be done. The late Lord Wantage, then Col. Loyd Lindsay, called the first English Red Cross society into existence as the national society for the relief of the wounded in war. It raised a sum of over £300,000 and the Office of Works placed at its disposal some houses to which the bounteous gifts of clothing, medical comforts and hospital equipment could be sent. It had a committee of ladies of which the Princess Christian filled the chair, while the members undertook the sorting, classifying and packing.

The committee of men dealt with the selection of the doctors and storekeepers, and endeavored to cope with the real problems of transport and the placing of depots so as to be of value in constantly mobile operations. Eventually a system of districts was adopted, one of these being along the Rhine from Strasburg, Baden, Cologne and Coblentz. Another area was along the Moselle and the Meuse. In France depots were placed in the towns between Lille and Amiens on the northwest and Rouen, Orleans and Tours on the northeast. Sums of £20,000 each were early remitted to Paris and Versailles.

The need for help was appalling, and it appealed to the best surgeons of the day. Among those who did brilliant work there was Sir William McCormack, afterward Surgeon-General to the Army, and others whose fame is yet remembered. How they overcame every imaginable difficulty lives in the annals of British surgery and has been an inspiration to all war work since.

At that time Germany possessed of course its famous Deaconess's House at Kaiserwerth, where Florence Nightingale had received her own training in the early '50s. But that was not enough, and the Crown Princess, the Empress Frederick of later years, turned to her own country, where the movement for the training of educated ladies for the nursing profession had begun to take definite shape in the opening of the school at St. Thomas's Hospital. Feminine imagination was awakened, and all were eager to be "war nurses." The most incompetent amateurs then, even as to-day, thought that a few weeks in a hospital ward and their own boundless enthusiasm would suffice. Happily they did not achieve their desires, but in the nursing of the Franco-German war there stands out one great figure who, though her name is rarely heard, has done more for the care of the poor and friendless in illness than any one now living. This is Mrs. Dacre Craven, wife of the vicar of St. Andrew's, Holborn, and it is permissible to quote what is said of her in the exhaustive history of nursing by Miss Adelaide Nutting and Miss Lavinia Dock. After reference to her as a pioneer "whose chief distinction was in improving the district nursing service," Florence Lees (as she then was) was "one of the first four pupils who entered the Nightingale School. She has been called the most highly trained nurse of her day, and probably was so. After training at St. Thomas's she had post graduate courses at Berlin, Dresden and Kaiserwerth, was surgical sister in King's College Hospital, then made a tour of inspection through the hospitals of Holland and Denmark. She was then able to gain entrance for training in the Hotel-Dieu Laboisiere and Enfant Jesus Hospitals of Paris, and later served under the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in two military hospitals, where she was allowed to pass through every department from the kitchens and linen rooms to the operating theatre."

In the Franco-German war she had the charge of a military hospital before Metz and of the ambulance supported by the Crown Princess. Her work received the highest commendation and she received for it the notable distinction in those days of the Iron Cross.

Perhaps it is not doing the British Red Cross organization any grave injustice to say that it remained more or less dormant in the years that followed. A little help in the Russo-Turkish war, and the same in the Græco-Turkish war it rendered, but the principle it represented had won acceptance. Even before the South African war it was recognized that it could be the most valuable adjunct to an army in the field, and the Marquis of Lansdowne when at the War Office called together a Central Red Cross Committee, on which also was represented the St. John Ambulance Association and the Nursing Reserve Association.

As an outcome of that the regular army medical and nursing services were augmented by special hospitals, several of which did notably good service in South Africa, as the Duke of Portland's Hospital, the Yeomanry Hospital, whose voluminous report at the end of the war was a really valuable record down to the minutest details of the actual working of such an effort, and the Welsh and Scottish hospitals. Then the St. John Ambulance men proved of the utmost courage and resourcefulness as bearers and attendants at the dressing stations.

In fact, so good was the work that after the war it appeared desirable to place it on a yet stronger basis. Queen Alexandra placed herself at the head of the movement in 1903. A new council was formed, and among the ladies then appointed and still on it are Adeline Duchess of Bedford, the Marchioness of Londonderry, the Marchioness of Lansdowne, the Countess of Derby, Countess Roberts, Georgiana Countess of Dudley, Lady Wantage, Lady Fisher and Miss Ethel McCaul. It was when presiding at the first meeting that Queen Alexandra made one of the few speeches of her life, and it concluded with the quotation that heads this chapter.

The appointment of Miss McCaul to this council had an important result, inasmuch as a few months later she went on a special mission with Queen Alexandra's approval and commendation to the Empress of Japan to study the Red Cross methods of that marvellously equipped army that stood up to Russia in 1904, and many of the lessons then learned are influencing the work going on to-day.

In regard to the Japanese system it can only be said that the Army Medical Service and the Red Cross are so closely interwoven as to be indistinguishable. Each supports the other at every point. On the outbreak of that war the Red Cross Society's Hospital was in the privileged position of being alone permitted to supply the army with nurses. It was ready to do so. It had built up a reserve of no fewer than 3,000 members. "Implicit obedience," says Miss McCaul, "plays as great a part in their training as the actual learning of nursing. Their gentleness of manner and soft voices are not their only recommendation, their intelligence and quickness are unmistakable. Added to these qualifications, they have the most perfect little hands and delicate touch."

But further, Miss McCaul found that the great ladies of the country were preparing themselves to render useful aid. At the famous Peeresses School she found all the pupils under regular instruction in "benevolent work," which means stretcher drill, first aid and bandage making. For the latter, a girl was given a long piece of calico, and in a stated time it had to be torn, rolled and finished for use. So admirably have Japanese women learned this work that they supplied every bandage required in the war, and not a single bought or machine made one was used.

Then again, the Japanese system of choosing nurses—who, by the way, have to pass two examinations, one as to constitutional fitness and one as to education—is excellent. Their training extends over three years, and after the examinations, if duly passed, they have the privilege of becoming army nurses for the military reserve hospitals. Equally in their training of male orderlies, who must be men of superior social class and good education, a very high standard was set up.

All this is reflected in the system of training that has been encouraged by the British Red Cross Society in recent years. Steady preparation has been going on, women have formed their voluntary aid detachments on lines to be complementary to that of men, and for the first time we have a centralized authority to make use of all nursing assistance as it is required for the two fields of service for which especially the Red Cross Society has accepted responsibility. One of these is the provision of supplemental aid for the sick and wounded in the field; the other is that of the hospitals of the Territorial Force, and to this latter another chapter must be devoted.

Two days after war was declared the appeal for help was made, and was signed by Queen Alexandra in her capacity of president. The Duke and Duchess of Devonshire promptly offered the use of Devonshire House for the vast work that would be involved, and here Sir Frederick Treves, the Countess of Dudley and many more began their work on a systematic plan. Particular branches of the work were assigned to different people, and though at first there was naturally some confusion, order was soon evolved, and all began to run with perfect smoothness. Queen Amelie of Portugal was an early visitor, and was so much impressed at the magnitude of the labors involved that she offered her personal help wherever it could be most usefully employed, which proved to be in the onerous but necessary work of a checking clerk.

Lady Gifford, who had nursed in South Africa and has since been much associated with hospital work with Mrs. Ludlow, R. R. C., who was matron of a hospital at Ladysmith and has since been matron of a large hospital in London, undertook the department of the selection of nurses. Both at the War Office and Admiralty hundreds of nurses, good, bad and indifferent, offered themselves for service in the early weeks of the war, but one and all were referred to the Red Cross Society, where as many as fifty a day were interviewed by these two ladies. As a fact, they had the choice of the very best material, though the standard they set up was exceedingly high, and intentionally so, as there was rigid determination to keep out the amateur nurse, the mere sentimentalist or even the adventuress who sees possibilities at such times.

Nothing short of a three years course of training at a recognized hospital was accepted, while further testimonials were also required. A register was formed, and as the necessities for hospital assistance began to declare themselves the society was ready to meet them in equipment and personnel. In the original scheme of operations in France it was intended to place a large base hospital at Rouen, and among the first to go out to make the necessary preliminary arrangements was Surgeon-General Sir Alfred Keogh. Thanks to the generosity of a lady, there was also to be a rest station at Boulogne, where the wounded could spend a few hours after the fatigues and thirst and general weariness of a long train journey, even though made in ambulance carriages. But the determination to evacuate Boulogne as a base of supplies in favor of Havre made a considerable change in these plans. It was moved northward, using Cherbourg as its base, and Lord Brassey placed his yacht Sunbeam, very completely equipped, at its service.

The work done in Paris under British Red Cross auspices was of great value and supplemented admirably that of the French sister society. A description by the Paris correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* may be taken as typical of the methods adopted:

"Among the numerous changes which the war has wrought upon the fair and vivacious countenance of Paris are the conversion of many of her most palatial hotels into temporary hospitals for the care of the wounded, and the utilization of exclusive clubs and similar institutions as working centres, where ladies of all grades of society meet together to sew garments for those to whose doors the war has brought the spectre of want. Over some of the most fashionable quarters of the city the Red Cross flag flies freely. Auxiliary hospitals seem to have cropped up everywhere, and in their wake these ouvroirs, or workrooms.

"Yesterday I paid a visit to the Hotel Majestic, in the Avenue Kleber, up by the Place L'Etoile, where a splendidly equipped English hospital has just been officially installed, under the supervision of Dr. Guest, a London medical practitioner, well known for the interest he takes in all matters concerning public hygiene. No wounded had yet come, but everything was in readiness to receive them—competent medical staff, trained nurses and energetic lay assistants or orderlies. As a hotel the Majestic, like so many other establishments of the sort in Paris, closed its doors long ago. It looked not only closed but superclosed, as it were, inasmuch as most of its ground floor windows were boarded up for the greater part of their height. This, as I afterward learned, was designed to insure greater privacy for the humane work to which the building has for the moment been dedicated.

"Bearing in mind accounts which have reached me as to the rough and ready treatment which has perhaps inevitably fallen to the lot of the wounded in sections of the vast theatre of war, where the tide of battle has ebbed and flowed with bewildering rapidity, I could not but wonder how the wounded soldiers will feel when they find themselves under the care of the medical and nursing staffs attached to the Hotel Majestic hospital. To stroll through the ample corridors and public rooms of the building is easily to imagine oneself in a royal palace, whose occupants have suddenly vacated it. Palatial is the only word by which to describe its internal proportions and its decorative embellishment. A change this, truly, from the railway sheds and waiting rooms where, by the pressure of sheer necessity, some of the wounded have hitherto received their first medical attention. That, parenthetically, is a subject on which I might say more, but for obvious reasons I forbear.

"As Dr. Guest observed, in showing me around, the spacious, airy public rooms of the Hotel Majestic make quite ideal wards. At the present moment the number of beds installed is fifty, divided about equally between two of the main apartments on the ground floor; but the accommodation which the huge building could afford is almost infinite. To survey these two rooms, with their neatly appointed beds, is like taking a peep at the show wards of some great public hospital over in England—something which the King and Queen might be invited to inspect in the course of a royal visit to one of our large cities. Everything is spotlessly white and scientifically ordered.

"And the operating theatre which has been established in what was the ladies' cloak room of the hotel is something to admire. If it had been specially designed for its present purpose it could not have been more adaptable to the surgeon's requirements. A fully equipped X-ray apparatus has also been installed. How different from the goods shed of which some one has told me, where the operating table consisted of a stretcher supported upon a couple of trestles! And talk of medical stores! Dr. Guest brought over with him something like a couple of tons of these.

"Although at the time of my visit no wounded had yet arrived at the Hotel Majestic, the doctors and nurses have already, in certain portions of the war area which I may not name, been brought face to face with war's carnage, and have rendered sorely needed service to wounded soldiers, both German and French. And let me say here that these English nurses have been tremendously impressed by the German soldiers. Said one of these ladies to me yesterday: 'The German soldiers I have tended are fine fellows—splendid men physically, so simple in their manners, and, oh! so grateful for any kindness you render them. Remembering these men, I find it extremely difficult to believe that they could be guilty of the atrocities that have been attributed to them.' And her companions, in whose presence she thus spoke to me, fully bore out her views. The impressions of these nurses were derived absolutely at first hand under circumstances calculated to bring out the real man in their individual patients, and that is why I here set them down."

Admirably organized is the French Rouge Croix work, and its estimated resources are about £1,000,000. It is tending our own wounded wherever occasion arises, and all medical men who have seen it at work are loud in its praise. Some official particulars tell of the immense amount of preliminary preparation that was carried through in coordinating the many offers of help in various forms that were received for the equipment of hospitals and ambulances and in increasing the efficiency and personnel of the three associations which it unites. The oldest of these, the Societe Francaise de Secours aux Blesses Militaires, possesses 10,000 nurses. Bands of trained nurses have been sent out wherever they could be usefully employed, and their ministrations were afforded not only to the Allies but to the enemy on many occasions.

A party of ten nurses left on the 9th for Belgium at the request of the Comtesse de Merode, president of the Belgian Croix Rouge. Though the society only employs the nurses who have gained their diploma after a regular training course of some months, it has arranged three courses of elementary instructions to respond to the great demand among the women who wish to take their share of caring for their wounded.

Next comes the exceedingly efficient and well directed Union des Femmes de France. The French woman with her admirable capacity for detail has found full scope for her talents in perfecting during recent years all that will conduce to the smooth working of the machinery now in motion. Its report just issued shows that their 204 auxiliary hospitals are fully equipped to receive more than 13,000 sick or wounded soldiers. The nursing will be done by a staff of 10,000, aided by more than 2,600 directresses. Flying columns composed of an infirmiere major and five nurses are being mobilized in a few hours and despatched to their posts. Forty-three of these have been sent out since the beginning of hostilities.

No less important service has been rendered by the Association des Dames Francaises, which had 105 auxiliary hospitals ready by August 6, each containing from 20 to 300 beds. All three societies have organized special ambulance classes, and they are now occupied in the inspection and organization of the private houses, halls, &c., which have been placed at their disposal. No offer is accepted below the minimum number of twenty beds, and funds for their complete equipment must be guaranteed for at least three months.

The Union des Femmes de France takes a specific standpoint as regards the part of women in hospitals and convalescent homes in time of war. It has definitely urged that no woman capable of fulfilling patriotic duties should fail to prepare herself for them when a call might arise. The members have been taught to feel that although they might never be called upon to exercise them, they should regard it as a point of honor to be prepared for them. At the Red Cross Conference of 1907 Gen. Pegoud, speaking as a member of the union, said he hoped that that assemblage would declare that in all nations the greatest efforts should be made to bring the masses to recognize the importance of training women to be ready to offer useful help, as this could not be given without long and careful preparation for the demands that would be made in war.

Then again is the Association des Dames de France, which by August 8 had 105 auxiliary hospitals in readiness for field service with beds ranging in numbers from twenty to two hundred each and supplied with all requisites.

Money and personal service has been quite as freely offered by the women of our Allies as here. The Rouge Croix quickly equipped 207 auxiliary hospitals, providing in all 1,700 beds. To this was offered the beautiful old house in the Rue de la Chaise of the Prince de Borghese, and Mme. Gaston Thomas undertook the direction there of a staff of sixty nurses, who are in charge of some 200 beds. The Actresses Home at Pont-aux-Dames has been given up for the work of mercy, and here are fifty beds. Even the historic building of the Comedie Francaise has been converted to the same humane purpose, and operations are performed in the famous foyer in which Rachel and Sarah Bernhardt, Talma and Coquelin have met the artistic celebrities of the world. Mme. Millerand, the wife of the Minister of War, promptly organized two ambulance centres in the Lycee Henri IV. and at the Ecole Polytechnique under two of the most distinguished of medical professors.

As far as the location of these various hospitals is concerned, it may be said that in these early days medical and nursing work is veiled in the same secrecy as the disposition of the various corps and units.

THE LONESOME FIRE HORSE.

"I DON'T know what's the matter with that horse lately," remarked Deputy Chief George Ross of the Seventh Battalion to his driver, Jim Barry, as they stood outside the stall of Rocks, the chief's horse, in the stable of Hook and Ladder 12 in West Twentieth street.

Chief Ross assumed a thoughtful pose as he stood in front of the stall stroking his sandy mustache nervously as he continued:

"It stands to reason that something has affected that animal. Why, up to a week ago he was one of the most dependable horses in the department. Never shirked, ate well, rested well and was right on the job whenever a box hit in. Suddenly a transformation has come over the animal.

"Something has come over that horse which has caused him to lose his appetite, to lose his sleep and render him totally unfit for fire duty. There is only one thing left for me to do, and that is to report him to the Commissioner for insubordination. Then we will get the department veterinary up here and he can give Rocks a careful examination and learn what ails him."

The proper report was submitted by Chief Ross and a few days after a veterinary came to examine Rocks.

"So he's off his feed?" was the first question the veterinary asked Chief Ross. "And he won't sleep? He refuses to do fire duty, eh? Well, when a horse refuses to do all those things then there is sure something the matter with him.

"In the first place he may be affected by his surroundings. Has his stall been changed, or have the quarters been renovated, or has anything taken place within the past week or so that would upset him?"

"Ah, you say that the horse truck that's been here for years has been supplanted by a motor truck. You say that Mike, Jerry and Tom, who were here to pull the truck, have been taken away and sent to another house. Well, that is the explanation. It is not a new occurrence in the department at all. It has happened frequently of late in houses where motor apparatus has replaced horse drawn apparatus and where one horse was retained to do special duty.

"Rocks is suffering from an ailment which I diagnose as loss of horse companionship. He's lonesome. He needs companions. Isn't it only natural for the animal to grow lonesome? This horse has been stabled here for six years and during that time he has always been in the company of other horses. They made him feel at home, they played with him, they fought with him; in fact they kept him occupied and the time passed quickly.

"When they were taken away and the auto truck was installed Rocks got lonesome. As day after day came and went and the other horses did not appear it worried Rocks so that he could not eat or sleep or do anything. A feeling came over him similar to that feeling that comes over human beings when they grow homesick.

"All the medicine in creation will not bring this horse back to his former condition. There is only one treatment that will prove beneficial and that is to put him back in the company of horses. It is not absolutely necessary to put him in the company of his former companions; any horses will do. I will make that suggestion to the proper authorities and you will lose your horse, Chief, but he will get well."

Rocks did not have to wait long before an order was received at the house of truck 12 to have the horse sent immediately to the house of truck 4, Forty-eighth street and Eighth avenue, where Battalion Chief Owen McKernan is in command. The motor truck has not invaded this house, in the heart of the Tenderloin, and there still remain horses to act as companions to Rocks. It is presumed that this treatment will be efficacious and that Rocks will be well enough soon to do regular fire duty. If he does get well and gets back into active service the members of truck 4 will have a very intelligent horse.

Chief Ross, who has ridden behind Rocks for six years, naturally is the best qualified person to give an account of the horse's history. While the chief feels the loss of his favorite, he quickly realized that something had to be done to save the animal from losing his efficiency.

"It is absolutely remarkable the way that horse developed," remarked the chief. "He had absolutely the most unpromising future of any horse in the department, to my knowledge, when he came here about six years ago. I think it was ex-Chief Croker who once remarked on seeing Rocks that he was a very poor specimen of horse flesh. Before he came to this house he was driven by a fire chaplain, and that gentleman received such unsatisfactory service from the horse that he requested that Rocks be removed and another horse sent to replace him.

"However, when the chaplain made that request and it was complied with, he did me a favor, for the horse was sent here. Rocks didn't impress me to any extent, either, when he arrived. But one morning I happened to discuss the subject of Rocks with Mrs. Ross and she quickly retorted that we men did not know how to take care of the animal. She positively stated that all Rocks needed was friends.

"Just to show that she knew what she was talking about, Mrs. Ross went to the refrigerator and took two carrots from it. These she made me place in my pocket and instructed me to feed them to Rocks when I arrived at quarters. I complied with Mrs. Ross's instructions and somehow that animal seemed to take more interest in his work. The following day I brought him two more carrots and he nibbled them in short order. That happened day after day, until Rocks and I became great friends.

"Really, after carrying carrots to that horse for six years, it upsets me to know that now I will not have to think of carrots any more. Then Mrs. Ross made it a custom to bring Rocks an apple every day, and the horse never failed to look for her at a certain time. But he is lucky in having such a friend, for I understand from Mrs. Ross that she intends to look after Rocks's welfare in his new quarters the same as she did when he was stationed here. Mrs. Ross declares that carrots made that horse and that carrots will be instrumental in bringing him back to his former condition."

On being requested to describe some of the qualities that helped to make Rocks one of the best known horses in the Fire Department, the chief enthusiastically replied:

"No doubt most of you have seen on the stage trained horses whose sole recommendation was their ability to pick out numbers called for by people in the audience. Of course, those horses were trained to the minute to do such work. With Rocks it was different. Nobody ever taught him to pick out numbers, but it is a fact, although remarkable, that Rocks knew practically every firebox in the district on which my buggy rolled out of quarters.

"When you consider what a large district I cover on the first alarm (the Seventh Battalion includes all the territory bounded by West Forty-seventh street, Broadway, Christopher street and the Hudson River) it seems wonderful that the horse could distinguish the number of the boxes as they hit in in this house. Without exception when an alarm sounded in my district he was under the harness waiting for it to drop on his broad back."

STUNTS FOR CHARITY.

FARMER CHARLES MILLER of Marshalltown, Ia., recently offered the ladies aid society of the Christian Church an acre of his best corn, provided the women picked it. The society snapped up the offer, donned overalls and picked a yield of forty-eight bushels. They have made a formal entry of the stunt on their minutes and insist it's a record of its kind.

The fact is, however, that the pastor of a Lutheran church in St. Louis two years ago exceeded the Marshalltown stunt with a margin of novelty to spare. A classmate of his in a theological seminary offered him $500 toward the church debt if he would make the dresses for six dolls to be displayed and sold at the coming church fair, the dresses to be passed upon as to fit and general appearance by a committee of disinterested women.

The pastor took up the offer, learned how to sew in three days, and bought the material, cut the doll garments and made them in time for the fair. Then he went out and kicked football all the afternoon with the high school boys of his parish. The dolls sold for an average of $12 each, which the pastor dressmaker also added to the fund to pay the church debt.

FORCED TO FIGHT.

WITH the exception of the one occasion in 1863, when the quotas of the States did not fill up as rapidly as desired, there has been no conscription in the United States. The draft riot in New York was the outcome of this conscription, and, as it happened, the muster rolls were filled in the meantime without need of the men originally drafted.

The announcement that England is likely to inaugurate a conscription scheme if enlisting is not more brisk occasioned some comment at first. Folks seemed to think it was a novelty in England. The fact is, however, that the worst form of conscription was employed in connection with recruiting the navy in Nelson's time. No one was safe from attack by the redoubtable press gangs, and the victories of this glorious epoch of England's history were won in part by men who often kicked and bit and tussled to break away from the gangs that hurled them into the navy.